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Military Training in the Making of Men

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ARGUMENTS as to the value of universal military training for making men are being so vigorously pressed today as to require us to take notice of the effort now being made in certain influential quarters to fasten upon us a permanent policy of conscription after the war. We must especially be on our guard against the danger of arguing from the apparent consequences of the selective draft in time of war to the probable consequences of that system in time of peace. Obviously in war time there is an idealism and devotion that go far to transform the drudgery, autocracy and mechanical rigidity of the military machine. The writer of this article deals only with conscription as a permanent policy and not with the wisdom of the selective draft in time of war.

Military Training in the Making of Men

FREDERICK J. LIBBY

THOSE who advocate the adoption of universal military training as a permanent policy for the United States have not based their contention solely on the necessity of building up a powerful military machine, a question which the outcome of our "war to end war" may settle forever. They have advanced also certain claims as to the value of military training in the making of men which have gained apparently wide acceptance.

It has been affirmed first that military training inculcates patriotism, secondly that it teaches obedience, third that it fosters democracy, and fourth that it develops the physical well-being of youth. Inasmuch as our youth need more patriotism, more obedience, more democracy, and better physique, many Americans would be willing to give military training a permanent place in the new world order if they were assured that it is the best teacher of these great virtues. Consequently, speeches upon the subject have been largely taken up with the presentation of these virtues as by-

products of a military system. That they are important could not be disputed; and that they are by-products of military training has been accepted almost without discussion by the unthinking American public. Let us consider them one by one and see how far they bear scrutiny.

Does Military Training Make Good Patriots?

First of all, does military training inculcate patriotism? From the confidence with which this assertion has been put forward one would suppose that it cannot be denied. In a superficial sense it does inculcate patriotism. The recent draft has made men who never before had been conscious of their obligation to America realize that they were its citizens and that as citizens they owe their country a debt. Poles, Lithuanians, Englishmen, Germans, Italians, Greeks, all have been forced to choose between conflicting loyalties and to confess their true allegiance. Outwardly, at least, they have renounced all nationalities except that which made them Americans. Those between twenty-one and thirty-one have entered our army. This sacrifice, it is assumed, has transformed all who were indifferent into patriots.

Now it is probable that such a transformation has taken place in very many instances, but *it must not be forgotten that this was in time of war.* The newspapers of the country have united to impress upon the minds of the doubtful the

urgency of the need. But remove the urgency, let peace once more descend upon us, and is it supposed that then this forced Americanization would have similar results? Is it not well known that hundreds of thousands of our immigrants left their native lands through hatred of this very service? They hated it because in time of peace it seemed to them an unwarrantable interference with their normal lives. Clearly in them it did not at that time breed patriotism. It led to their expatriation. They preferred to become exiles from home forever rather than submit to it. Consequently, is it not safe to conclude that in a time of universal peace the great majority of the American people would not give cheerful service to a country whose urgent need of it they failed to see? In the case of many, military training would kindle not patriotism but the fires of discontent.

Quite as serious an objection to military training as a teacher of patriotism is found in the narrowness of the patriotism that it engenders. I am not sure that it even deserves the name of patriotism in the twentieth century. It is rather a jealous, tribal sensitiveness, an intense nationalism which verges on arrogance. The military patriot becomes suddenly punctilious about "national honor" defined in medieval terms. Jostle me and you must fight me, provoke me and I will take your life. This spirit is fertile soil for breed-

ing international suspicion. This is the patriotism that fosters war. It tends to destroy the very nation that it swears to defend, a fact to which Germany today bears eloquent witness.

Now true patriotism, I take it, is a broad and comprehensive virtue. It is constructive. It is intelligent. It seeks to promote the welfare of the State in all its complex life. Farmer, factory worker, financier, boy scout and college professor, miner and poet and preacher, cartoonist and nurse, all serve the State *within* their vocations, and without military training they have been proving their patriotism. More than this, is not the true patriot active in the public service outside of his vocation? The conscientious use of the ballot is the least of his obligations as a citizen. His bank account and his time alike will always be at the command of the State in so far as his means will allow. If desirable public improvements demand a higher tax rate, the patriot will pay it cheerfully. He will accept public office as a public trust, and far from seeking private profit in so doing, he will avoid scrupulously even the appearance of fraud or simony.

This larger patriotism military training has never inculcated. We have never asked that it should even try to teach it. Who has ever expected a soldier to pay his taxes more willingly than a civilian does? Who expects him to show in civil life the humble, earnest spirit in which he

entered the army—as one who gives, not one who gets? Who expects him to set a lifelong example of disinterested public service? One has but to recall the history of pension legislation to perceive that the soldier can learn a kind of patriotism which does not cover his life as a civilian. A brave man will die for his country, but he must have many other virtues besides bravery if he will live for it; and it is the sum of these virtues that we may call the twentieth century patriotism.

Nor can love for America on the part of our immigrant population be taught by soldiering. The world is so constituted as to admit of no short cuts. There is only one way to make an immigrant love America. He must find America lovable! An exploited Pole will not be made a patriot by marching him up and down. A garment worker who is always hungry needs proper wages to make him feel patriotic. Conditions in the factory and the mine must breed in our immigrants love for the country of their adoption or they will soon be found among the rebels, made by military training only the more dangerous. True, they may be cowed into subservience for a while, they may be kept under by methods which we have come to associate with Prussianism, but loyal and free Americans they will never be. America at her best means liberty, opportunity, democracy, brotherhood, service. Only he who has found these has reached the true America. Only he who is ex-

periencing here an unwonted richness of life will feel the patriotic fervor which we should like every newcomer to our shores to know.

Does Military Training Teach Obedience?

Secondly, does military training teach obedience? Here again the unthinking answer is that the question admits of no controversy. Surely if military training teaches anything, it teaches obedience. From dawn to dawn, whether in camp or out of it, the soldier is made aware of the inexorable power of the military machine. To it he must yield or he will be crushed under it. It knows no mercy and shows no favors. It is as inflexible as Death. How, then, it is asked, can a boy pass through this machine and fail to learn obedience?

Yes, he learns it,—that is, most boys do,—although the prisons and guardhouses betray its failure with an appreciable number. But what kind of obedience does he learn? Is it not a kind that enlightened public sentiment has rejected from both school and home probably forever? Even those who regard as a golden age the time when father and schoolmaster were absolute monarchs and maintained their authority with rod and cane, do not seriously look for its return. It was part of a system of blind obedience resting on brute force which free men everywhere are challenging. The reduction of men to unthinking, irresponsible, automatic machines has value only

for certain military purposes. From every other point of view such discipline is the exact opposite of what is generally regarded as desirable. Were this not the case, why should we stop with a little military training for our young men? Should we not all live better under martial law? Belgium knows the answer.

Does Military Training Make Good Citizens?

In the third place, militarism is said to foster democracy. It has been described as "the great leveller." Rich and poor are forced to sleep in the same tent, the refined and the vulgar to march shoulder to shoulder, and presto! democracy has arrived! This blind juxtaposition of the uncongenial we admit to be a feature of the life of the rank and file under military compulsion. We grant even more. Mother's darling at camp will get the sugar only after his messmates at the table have licked their spoons and dipped them into it. Cleanliness and health of body and mind will be inevitably exposed to the contagion of that which is vicious and unclean. No, it cannot be denied that military service in the ranks will prove a great leveller.*

* Some competent observers are enthusiastic as to the moral tone now prevailing in our cantonments at home. We must remember two things however: First, there is today a keen and intelligent public interest and a passion of common purpose which inspires officers and men alike. The activities of Y. M. C. A., Knights of Columbus, Hostess' Houses and the other welfare organizations are stimulated to a degree scarcely to be expected in time of peace; and second, the enthusiasm for the war and preparation for it has a unifying and energizing effect for which a substitute cannot be found in the dull routine of peace drills. The history of conscript camps during the days of Europe's armed peace is not a history of democracy or moral uplift.

This does not establish, however, the democracy of military training. The usual difference in the status of the educated and the uneducated, of the rich and the poor, of the socially "superior" and the socially "inferior" obtains just as much in the army as in any other profession. College men, for instance, can always rise from the "democracy" in which they find themselves by studying for commissions. Moreover, the "paper work," the figuring, etc., required of commissioned officers is now so exacting that it is not easy in these days for privates ever to be promoted to the coveted positions higher up.

Only the self-deceived and the foolish would look for democracy in the most rigid type of aristocracy known to man. The commander of an army, even under the most favorable conditions, is necessarily an autocrat, in comparison with whom the Czar of all the Russias wielded a wooden scepter. In time of war he crowds even God from his throne, abrogates both civil and moral law, and becomes, to his army, mind, will, and even conscience. Below him in descending scale his officers share his absolutism. What place, then, in a military machine is there for democracy?

Nor can it be claimed that even if all were to be privates, the army would offer the only place where widely separated classes of American society

can meet. A doctor's profession brings him into close touch with rich and poor and high and low, and gives him better opportunity really to know men than does the loose talk of the barracks. What is true of medicine is true of the law, the ministry, business, engineering, politics, and many other forms of civil activity. They offer better opportunities of knowing one's fellows on sides worth knowing than does military training under peace conditions. The limits to the breadth of almost any reputable civilian's acquaintance are time and inclination, and this will be increasingly true as we democratize our industrial life.

Does Military Training Insure Good Health?

In the fourth place, military training is said to develop men physically. After the testimony which our drafted men have brought home in their own persons, it cannot be denied that military training has improved the health and physique of the vast majority of its recipients under the recent draft. Outdoor life with several hours of exercise will work wonders though all the laws of hygiene be disregarded, and though the exercises taken be the poorest that could be chosen. This is true especially if only picked men are to be recipients of the training and those who need it most can be disregarded. No one will

deny that outdoor life is beneficial, but will anyone affirm that military drill is the healthiest form of outdoor life?

Dr. Dudley Sargent, director of the Harvard gymnasium, has proven the manual of arms to offer none of the essential elements of a good physical exercise. The training it gives is one-sided, it lacks interest—at any rate in times of peace—it does not quicken adequately the respiration or the circulation of the blood, it requires identically the same of all, it impairs the tone of the muscles by prolonged tension, it has little or no value as training for the central nerve system, and it offers slight opportunity for the display of coolness, courage, judgment, and presence of mind, for struggle, and cooperation, and loyalty, qualities all of which are fostered on the other hand by our national sports. Probably time could not be spent out of doors in any conceivable form of activity that would be productive of so little physical good as that which is devoted to military drill, using the term in the restricted sense.

Regarding other features of up-to-date military training such as the bayonet drill and trench construction, it is only fair to say that they furnish the strong with excellent means of further physical development. Little account, however, can be made in the inflexible system of the army of differences between individuals. Within roughly fixed

limits all are forced to undergo the same physical strain day after day provided they are well enough to be out of bed. Nowhere else in modern life is blind rigidity of requirement combined with a severity that exacts the full pound of flesh even from the strong.

One more factor in the situation cannot be ignored, and that is the effect that military training may fairly be expected to have upon the physique of the soldiers after their return to civil life. Suppose, for example, that a mill-hand after living out of doors for six months or a year returns to the confinement of his former life for ten or even eight hours a day. Is it not likely that after a few weeks either he will abandon the mill and be lost to the industry that needs him, or that he will gradually fall back into the unhealthy rut from which he was temporarily withdrawn and be really worse off than before? As a practical measure would not the shortening of the working day of all factory workers to a maximum of eight hours with a great extension of the garden movement, of sunset baseball leagues, of park and playground, for the months when men and boys can be out of doors, and of municipal gymnasium privileges and swimming pools for winter use do more to improve their health permanently than a year in the army, even assuming, what is by no means promised, that nearly all of them would be able to pass its physical examinations and get in?

If it is believed that this important matter of physical health cannot be left to individual initiative but must be assured by another of the rapidly increasing State regulations, would not a great industrial army digging sewers and irrigation ditches instead of trenches, building roads and bridges instead of barbed wire entanglements, and practising forestry from the scientific rather than the military viewpoint, without the injurious and wasteful military drill, offer all the physical benefits accruing from army life and at the same time escape its inherent evils?

The Summing Up

Military training, like State socialism, would fain be considered the cure of all our nation's ills. No such panacea exists. That our boys need better physique, and better habits of obedience, and more democracy, and sounder patriotism may readily be admitted. How to lift them to this higher plane of living despite the downward pull of inertia and selfishness is a question that has not yet been adequately answered. It will not be solved by any program. It is a spiritual problem and no mechanical device will meet it. Education and inspiration will solve it, but their effectiveness depends upon the sincere cooperation of all Americans. Patriotism, for example, can be taught by the school and the press, but the factory and the mine also must engender it. In fostering intel-

ligent obedience no substitute can replace the home and the school, but they need to be supplemented by wise factory foremen and by constituted authority in all walks of life working along democratic, not autocratic lines. Democracy is one of the fundamental Christian virtues and as such it cannot be forced upon men by mere contiguity. To be real it must be of the heart. In our public school system and in the ordinary intercourse of our business, professional and social life, we have abundant opportunity to be as democratic as we want to be. Patriotism demands that we enter into our opportunity. With regard to the physical development of our youths there is no doubt that much more pains should be taken in the public schools. Every child ought to be given a sound body as well as a reasonable mental equipment before he finishes his school days. To what age the State should keep its hand upon him to compel him to maintain a high grade of physical efficiency, future experience will have to determine.

It is probably reliance on a specious materialistic philosophy that is the cause of the collapse of the whole argument for military training in the making of men. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts,"—by His spirit transmitted through man to man, and through men to boys,—only so can the America of our dreams find realization.

EAVESDROPPING

Proceedings of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, Jan. 23, 1918, p. 249. Testimony of Major General George Barnett, U. S. Marine Corps, on Compulsory Military Training

GEN. BARNETT: Congressman Butler of Pennsylvania brought to the attention of our headquarters the fact that the school authorities at West Chester, Pa., had made it obligatory for all male attendants at the public schools to be instructed in military warfare, and at the request of Congressman Butler a sergeant was detailed for this duty. In this way there was inaugurated compulsory military education at schools. There is no doubt that if this were followed by other communities much good would result therefrom, as it would lay the groundwork for universal military training. These headquarters are willing to cooperate in all respects with communities, so far as it is practicable to do so, to provide instructors for this purpose. We expect to get quite a large number of recruits from this school.

I know of no better way of forwarding recruiting than this, because these young men, if they get the military training, when they get old enough, you may reasonably count on fifty per cent of them entering the service. Whether they enter the Marine Corps, the Army or the Navy, is immaterial, but they will have the military training and they will be better potential soldiers, as well as better citizens in every possible way.

MR. BRITTEN: What is the average age of those pupils in West Chester?

GEN. BARNETT: I understand from 16 to 19 years old.

CHAIRMAN PADGETT: I want to ask you one or two questions. You were speaking about assigning an officer to West Chester.

GEN. BARNETT: Yes, a noncommissioned officer.

CHAIRMAN PADGETT: I am not speaking now in criticism, because I approve of that personally, but I want to ask for information so that it will be in the record, under what authority of law do you do that?

GEN. BARNETT: Under the recruiting regulations.

CHAIRMAN PADGETT: That is what I want to know, because the question will be asked on the floor.

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